

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Of equal importance is the urgent need to take preemptive action against the Smith brothers, Sinclair's owners, to ensure prior restraint of this clearly commercial speech. The market value of one hour of Friday prime time for 62 broadcast outlets would represent a massive violation of the prohibitions on corporate contributions to a candidate's campaign.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.